

QUESTION #10 – What about the idea of repentance in grace salvation?

Those who hold to Lordship salvation cloud the grace Gospel by presenting the idea that one must “repent” as a term of salvation. In other words, their Gospel message is not one of simply believe on Jesus Christ to be saved, it is a message of repent and believe and surrender and obey. John MacArthur writes: “Saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender, and a supernatural eagerness to obey” (p. 31).

What they actually mean by the repentance idea is that one must turn from sin in order to have a real salvation conversion. Repentance is almost added as a separate requirement for salvation. One must repent of all sin first and then believe on Jesus Christ second and then obey Christ third.

John MacArthur, for example, says “We begin with a chapter on repentance, because that is where the Savior began. Matthew 4:17 records the dawning of Christ’s public ministry: “From that time [the imprisonment of John the Baptist] Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (p. 159). Then he goes on to say, “As we have seen repeatedly, the gospel according to Jesus is as much a call to forsake sin as it is a summons to faith” (p. 161). “Repentance...is a redirection of the human will, a purposeful decision to forsake all unrighteousness and pursue righteousness instead” (p. 163).

Now when we read the one Gospel that is designed to present the Gospel to the world, John, we may immediately observe that not one time in the Gospel of John does Jesus say repent and believe on Me and you will have everlasting life. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, He connects this idea of repentance to the nation Israel and a Kingdom message.

Dr. Earl Radmacher made a very interesting observation when he said repentance is specifically aimed at Israel. He writes: “God has given only one condition for individuals to enter God’s kingdom, faith in Christ. However, He has given two conditions for the kingdom to come to the nation Israel: faith in Christ and repentance” (*Salvation*, p. 243).

One certainly would have to acknowledge that this idea of repent of all sin and forsake all unrighteousness and pursue all righteousness is not the same message as a simple message of “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

In fact, this idea contradicts what Jesus even said about sin and salvation because He said: “I said therefore to you that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). He did not say “unless you repent of your sins you will die in your sins.” So Jesus, in presenting eternal life and death issues in John’s Gospel, said if you do not believe in Me you will die in your sins. Jesus said the sin problem and the death penalty are resolved by believing on me.

Dr. Radmacher also accurately observes that “The word repentance isn’t found in John’s Gospel. Yet the Fourth Gospel is the only book in all of Scripture whose stated purpose is evangelistic, that is, to tell unbelievers what they must do to have eternal life (John 20:31). Therefore, it is extremely telling that the words repent (metanoeo) and repentance (metanoia) do not occur there. **This shows that repentance is not a synonym for faith in Christ and that it is not a necessary precursor to faith in Christ.** If either were the case, the book on evangelism would have said so” (*Salvation*, pp. 239-240).

We seem to have two different messages here; one is a message of repentance, believe and obey and the other message of simply believe. The first message is stressed by Lordship proponents and the other is stressed by Grace proponents. Dr. Joseph Dillow said it well when he said when it comes to his presentation of the grace Gospel “MacArthur’s opinion is...misinformed teaching” (*The Reign of the Servant Kings*, p. 8).

It is more than just a coincidence to observe that in the Gospel of John, which is a Gospel written for the purpose of getting people to believe on Jesus Christ for salvation (John 20:30-31), **the idea of believing on Jesus Christ for everlasting life is presented nearly 100 times where as the word “repent” is not mentioned even one time.**

In fact, when we track the word “repent” through Paul’s epistles, which are actually designed to reveal the grace gospel that Jesus Christ gave him, **the word “repent” only occurs in Romans once (2:4) and, 0 times in Galatians, 0 times in Ephesians. On the other hand the words “believe” and “faith” show up in Romans 55 times; in Galatians 24 times and in Ephesians 10 times. Clearly the grace gospel revealed by Paul does not stress repent, but believe.**

The actual word “repent” (μετανοεω) comes from two Greek words: 1) Meta (μετα) 2) Noeo (νοεω), which **means to change your thinking or change your mind** (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 287). When reading the word “repent” in the Bible it is important to always observe the context so one may accurately determine what exactly is the change of thinking or change of mind that is being discussed. Floyd Barackman said, “Repentance does not refer to a change of life, but a change of mind” (*Practical Christian Theology*, p. 337).

In Luke 17:3-4, the idea of repentance means that a brother who has wronged you, changes his thinking about the fact that he did wrong you. In fact, in this context the one who needs to repent is a brother, not an unbeliever.

In Luke 3:3-8, the idea of repentance was that Israel needed to change her thinking about her need of forgiveness of sins and rely upon the Savior being introduced by John who is the Salvation of God and the Christ (v. 15). Israel did not think she had a sin problem because she was physically related to Abraham (v. 8), and she needed to change her mind about this fact.

Even Jesus, in connection with the nation Israel, connected the idea of repenting to believing on Him (Mark 1:15). In fact, Dr. Radmacher believes that repentance is only for Israel and is not even connected in any way to the Grace Age Gospel.

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Our position is that a change of thinking about what saves a person is involved in believing on Jesus Christ. If one is going to connect “repentance” to grace salvation, this is how it connects. At the moment one believes on Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit convicts a person so that he changes his mind and thinking about trusting anything else other than Christ for salvation.

As repentance relates to grace salvation it is not a separate work to be performed by change of life ; it is a faith in Jesus Christ which is a changing of mind or thinking about what will save a person from sin. Biblical salvation is changing one’s mind to totally and completely rely upon Jesus Christ for salvation from sin.

It is an attitude that turns from trusting in self, dead works, human merit or dead religion to placing faith in the Living, Resurrected Savior. As Dr. Chafer said, “It is asserted that repentance, a change of mind, enters of necessity into the very act of believing on Christ, since one cannot turn to Christ from other objects of confidence without that change of mind” (*The Terms of Salvation*, pp. 124-125).

When one turns by faith to trusting Jesus Christ for salvation, from all other trusts and confidences, it is a major act of repentance because it is a major change of thinking.

QUESTION #11 – What about the idea of discipleship in grace salvation?

Those who hold to a Lordship salvation concept typically throw the word “disciple” or “discipleship” into their concept of salvation. Again MacArthur states, “The call to Calvary must be recognized for what it is: a call to discipleship under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. To respond to that call is to become a believer. Anything less is simply unbelief” (p. 30).

So it isn’t enough to invite people to believe on Jesus Christ, you must also inform them they must be willing to commit themselves to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Christian Temple accurately summed up the matter when he said: “Perhaps the greatest error in the Lordship Salvation view is the apparent call to discipleship for those who are yet unsaved. If one must believe the Gospel, have faith, and make Christ Lord in order to be saved, this is a condition that must be met by someone who does not yet know what the Lordship of Christ means. This results in a Catch 22 which inevitably leads to eternal death. You must make Christ Lord in order to be saved, **but you must first be saved in order to make Christ Lord**” (*Lordship Salvation: Is it Biblical*, p. 4).

Having read much material about “discipleship” it is apparent to me that those who throw discipleship into a presentation of the grace Gospel don’t know much about discipleship and they know even less about grace.